



Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs

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Kentucky Medal for Freedom

Families of Military Killed in Combat are Eligible



(FRANKFORT, Mar. 13, 2009 – Governor Steve Beshear presented 38 Kentucky Medals for Freedom today to the families of 15 Kentucky military members who died in combat.

“We are here because 15 men died violently thousands of miles from here — died on our behalf and on behalf of all who support right and good in the world,” Governor Beshear said. “We are here to honor them, but in so doing we are reminded again of how much they are missed.”

Wives, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers and grandparents, children from babes in arms to young adults stood one family at a time to receive the Medals honoring their loved ones.

“Remembering their loss fills all of us with pain,” Governor Beshear said. “On the other hand, I stand here filled with pride and hope.

“I am proud because these soldiers have – with unflinching resolve and disregard for their own safety – carried on a tradition of loyalty and bravery that has become the badge of honor for Kentuckians throughout our nation’s history.

“My pride is matched by hope, because these 15 men have emboldened my spirit. There is much hardship and misery in this world, and free people everywhere are threatened by those who would take that freedom away, who would drape this world in a cloak of darkness.

“But I do not fret and I will not despair, because the power of our enemies pales in the face of the kind of courage, sacrifice, and dedication to duty demonstrated by these men.

“Simply put, these men and other men and women like them have given me the strength to believe that democracy and freedom, in the end, will prevail.”

In 2008, the General Assembly authorized the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs (KDVA) to present the Kentucky Medal for Freedom to the family of each Kentuckian killed on active duty in a combat-related incident on or after January 1, 1991.

Representative Brent Yonts sponsored the legislation that created the Medal for Freedom and America’s Mint, a Kentucky small business, cast the first five hundred medals before year’s end.

“We are not able to present these awards to the heroes who earned them, but we can bestow them upon you, their closest family members,” Governor Beshear said. “That is fitting.

“This medal is a testament not only to the sacrifice of these soldiers but also to the sacrifice of their families, without whose support their service would not have been possible.

“Let me say that again – without your love and support, they would not have been able to serve their country so honorably.

“Please accept our formal recognition and this tangible emblem of the appreciation Kentuckians hold for our fallen soldiers and for your courage, resilience and unselfishness.”

The Fallen whose families were honored today are:

SFC Jason L. Bishop, US Army; Williamstown, KY

MSG Clinton W. Cubert, KY Army National Guard; Lawrenceburg, KY

SGT Matthew L. Deckard, US Army; Elizabethtown, KY

CPL Nicholas J. Dieruf, US Marine Corps; Versailles, KY

SPC Stephen P. Downing II, US Army; Burkesville, KY

LCPL Thomas P. Echols, US Marine Corps; Shepherdsville, KY

LCPL Robert A. Lynch, US Marine Corps; Louisville, KY

CPL William L. McMillan III, US Army; Lexington, KY

CPL Joshua M. Moore, US Army; Russellville, KY

SGT James A. Sherrill, KY Army National Guard; Ekron, KY

CAPT Eric D. Terhune, US Marine Corps; Lexington, KY

SGT Daniel W. Wallace, KY Army National Guard; Dry Ridge, KY

CPL Christopher T. Warndorf, US Marine Corps; Burlington, KY

PO2 Jeffrey L. Wiener, US Navy Reserves; Louisville, KY

SFC William A. Zapfe, US Army; Constantine, KY

Six other families who could not be in Frankfort today have already received their Medals for Freedom.

KDVA has begun contacting the families of service members they believe may meet eligibility criteria for the Medal for Freedom. Since 1991, approximately 90 Kentuckians lost their lives in combat-related incidents. KDVA needs help finding the next of kin for many of these fallen heroes.

Find the list of services members tentatively identified by the Department as potential Medal for Freedom nominees on KDVA's Medal for Freedom web page,

<http://veterans.ky.gov/medalforfreedom.htm>

If you believe your loved one may be eligible for nomination, call or email Pamela Cypert at 502-564-9203, pamela.cypert@ky.gov.